



# THE UNPREACHED GOSPEL

## THE UNPREACHED GOSPEL: WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark if we haven't met and I'm so excited you're here today as we kick off a brand new series.

### The Problem

*"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved," (Romans 10:9 NIV).*

My son Judah is going to be five soon. When I was his age I became increasingly worried that my then Buddhist Grandma was not going to go to heaven. So one day I sat her down and said, "Grandma, do you want to go to heaven?" And she said, "Yes". And I said, "If you want to go to heaven, you need to be a Christian. Do you want to become a Christian?" And she said, "How do I do that?" And I said, "Repeat after me." Then I led her in some version of the sinner's prayer and I said, "That's it! You're a Christian!" And I felt a tremendous weight lifted off of my shoulders. My Grandma was going to heaven. Come to find out, she didn't share in my feelings of rejoicing. My Mom later told me that after our interaction my Grandma went up to her and asked, "Is that really all it takes to become a Christian?"

*"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved," (Romans 10:9 NIV).*

Is that really all it takes to become a Christian? Is a verbal confession all that is needed to be saved? Like in 'The Office' when Michael Scott is having money problems and has to declare bankruptcy so he stands in front of everyone and yells, "I declare, 'BANKRUPTCY!'" Is that how it works?

**OG DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *Do you think my Grandma became a genuine Christian in that moment? Why or why not?*

Although we would like to believe it, I think in our heart-of-hearts we know there's more to the gospel than that. But perhaps in our zeal to see people saved, we have preached an incomplete gospel. A couple of weeks ago God spoke to me through the Prophet Jeremiah,

<sup>16</sup> *"This is what the Lord Almighty says:*

*"Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.*

<sup>17</sup> *They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The Lord says: You will have peace.' And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.'*

<sup>18</sup> *But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear His word? Who has listened and heard His word?" (Jeremiah 23:16-18).*



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In Jeremiah's day there were people masquerading as prophets of God. And the Bible says they were going around filling the people with false hopes. This wasn't 'New Hope' it was 'New Hype'. They were preaching words from their own minds – just whatever sounded good saying, "God says, you'll have peace! No harm will come to you!" Listen to what God says,

*<sup>21</sup> "I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied.*

*<sup>22</sup> But if they had stood in My council, they would have proclaimed My words to My people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds,"*

*(Jeremiah 23:21-22).*

It was like God was asking me, "Mark, what kind of Pastor are you going to be? Are you going to preach a gospel of your own making, filling people with false hopes? Or will you stand in My council – will You meditate on My Word and proclaim My words to My people?"

## The Un-Preached Gospel

Contrary to our Western Gospel, Jesus' message was quite different. He didn't go around asking people to invite Him into their hearts, He didn't ask for a show of hands and He never led anyone in a sinner's prayer. Jesus' primary message was this,

**"Repent, for the Kingdom of God has come near." - Jesus**

Jesus was saying, "Something is happening right now, in your lifetime. Something that has been anticipated from the very beginning. Heaven is coming to earth, God's Kingdom is at hand, so whatever your life was before, leave it behind because God is making everything new and you don't want to miss it. Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry describing God's Kingdom, teaching about how to enter it, and calling people to lay down their lives so that they could take hold of it.

In this series we are going to unpack Jesus' gospel and see if there are any discrepancies with how we understand the gospel today. In Week 1, I want to give you a roadmap for our entire series and show you how you can get the very most out of these next six weeks.

Before we begin, I want to remind us of what this series is really about – The Gospel. The word 'Gospel' in scripture is the Greek word 'euangelion'. It literally translates to 'Good News'. Not old news, not fake news, not bad news, but good news. What we are talking about is Good News!

**OG DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *Why do you think Jesus' message is called 'Good News'? How has the gospel been 'Good News' in your life?*





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When my wife and I found out that we were expecting our first baby, it was good news. Not because we thought our lives were about to become easier, not because it was going to be comfortable, not because it wasn't going to cost us anything, not because our lives weren't going to change in radical ways, but because God was bringing new life into our lives! In the same way, the gospel isn't good news because it makes your life easier, or more comfortable, or because it won't cost you anything, or change your world in radical ways. It is good news because God is giving you a new life! By the way, we named that baby 'Evangeline' 'euangelion' (Bringer of Good News).

## Self-Study, Small Groups, Services, Panel

As we kick off our series, there are several key ways to get the very most out of it. Self-study: Each of you should have received a bookmark on your seats when you came in. If you don't have one, just raise a hand and an usher will come by. This is our 40-day reading plan. Monday will be day one of our reading plan. This weekly reading will help you to study the passages of scripture we will be focusing on for our series. As much as you will get out of our weekly services, we are believing that God will speak to you personally as you get into His Word. Another excellent resource that helped to shape our understanding of Jesus' gospel was a book called, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, by George Eldon Ladd. That could be an additional component to your self-study if you want to go deeper. So the first is self-study. The second is small-groups. If you're not in one already, we want to encourage you to join a small-group (we call them Ohana groups). Every week we send out weekly discussion questions so that you can go even deeper into what was talked about in service. If you are interested in joining a small group you can talk to P Earl or let us know in your connection card. Self-study, small-groups, and services. Commit to joining us for the entire series to get the very most out of this season. If you have to miss a service I want to encourage you to check it out online at [Nhcohawaii.org](http://Nhcohawaii.org). Self-study, small-groups, and services. At the very end of the series we are going to have a Pastor's Panel so please submit any questions you have throughout the series so we can discuss them then.

## Series Roadmap

Now that we know how to get the very most out of this series, what are we going to be covering in these six weeks?

### Week 1

This week we are going to unpack Jesus' main message, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God has come near" and answer the question, "What did Jesus mean by Kingdom?"

### Week 2

Next week, Pastor Mike is going to cover the parables of Jesus and how Jesus used these illustrations to paint for His listeners a picture of the Kingdom. This Kingdom that Jesus was illustrating was unlike anything His listeners expected or imagined and it may even challenge the way we think about Kingdom today. Tune in next week to get the big picture of Jesus' parables as we unveil the mystery of the Kingdom.





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## **Week 3**

In the following week, Pastor Earl is going to cover the life of the Kingdom. I think when many of us think about eternal life, we picture a future promise where we will spend eternity in heaven. But did you know that Jesus also spoke about eternal life as a present reality? In this week Pastor Earl will teach us which elements of eternal life are available to us today.

## **Week 4**

In week 4, Pastor Lori is going to talk about Jesus' greatest sermon of all – The Sermon on the Mount. If you thought getting to the Kingdom of God was as simple as a verbal confession and the raising of a hand, I've got good news and bad news. The bad news is that Jesus actually requires perfection! The good news is that He is going to show us how. So if you're not perfect yet, you definitely don't want to miss Pastor Lori's message on the righteousness of the Kingdom.

## **Week 5**

If there's one area of Jesus' gospel we conveniently leave out of our messages it's this. In Week 5 Pastor Theresa is going to talk about the Demand of the Kingdom. Does being a follower of Jesus require anything of us? Does entering the Kingdom demand something of us? I thought it was a free gift! If salvation is a free gift, why does Jesus often talk about the cost of following Him? Of course, with a topic this heavy we had to bring out the big guns! Don't miss this week as Pastor Theresa talks about the Demand of the Kingdom.

## **Week 6**

Finally by week 6, we should have a pretty clear vision of Jesus' gospel of the Kingdom. Find out our role in Jesus' plan as Pastor Glenn shows us the Church's role.

## **The Gospel of the Kingdom**

With the time we have remaining, I want to talk about the central theme of Jesus' message – The Kingdom. I believe the Western Church has placed so much emphasis on the individual's salvation and the individual's regeneration that we have lost sight of the bigger picture. Don't get me wrong! I celebrate the salvation of every individual and the transformation of every individual. To do so is not incorrect, but to focus only on these things is incomplete. Jesus was intimately concerned with the needs of every individual but He never lost sight of His Kingdom mission – and it was about the Kingdom that He spent most of His time teaching.

The challenge in understanding what is meant by 'Kingdom' when you read scripture is that, 'Kingdom' in the Bible can refer to several things. I want to show you the three main ways 'Kingdom' is used, especially in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. My hope is that, as you come across the many 'Kingdom' passages in scripture, you will be able to determine which meaning is being used.

**OG DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *When you hear the word 'Kingdom', what comes to mind?*





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When I say, 'Kingdom,' what comes to mind? Maybe you think of the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, or the United Kingdom. When most modern readers come across the word, 'Kingdom' we think of a realm over which one rules or the people under a given rule. Like in the Lion King, when Mufasa takes Simba up to Pride Rock and says, "Look, Simba. Everything the light touches is our Kingdom." He's talking about the realm or territory that Simba will rule over. The land and the animals are his kingdom. So we think of a people or a place.

However, when the Bible refers to God's Kingdom, it is almost always referring to His reign, His rule, and His sovereignty, not to a realm or people.

*"The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His Kingdom rules over all,"  
(Psalm 103:19).*

*"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations," (Psalm 145:13).*

In these passages, God's Kingdom is His Kingship, His rule and authority. It is not referring to a people or a place. In Mark 10:15 Jesus says,

*"Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it," (Mark 10:15).*

What needs to be received in this passage? A place? The Church? Heaven? A people? No, what is being received is God's rule – His Kingship. To enter into God's Kingdom means you are turning from the devil's rule or your own rule and coming under God's rule here and now. When Jesus says,

*"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," (Matthew 6:33).*

What are we seeking? A people? A realm? Heaven? No, we are seeking God's righteousness, His rule, His reign in our lives. When we pray, "Your Kingdom come," what are we saying? For heaven to come to earth? In a sense, yes, but what specifically about heaven? That the streets would turn to gold? That we'd all get a harp? No, we are praying for God's reign to become more of a reality – more realized than it is now. "Your Kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is what Jesus taught us to pray. He was saying when you pray, petition for God to reign in your life, in your home, in your school, in your government. Pray that His Kingly sovereignty and power would put to flight every demonic entity and stronghold and enemy of righteousness. Pray that God alone would be King over all the world.

**OG DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *What is the difference between our modern understanding of 'Kingdom' and the way the Bible uses it?*





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So God's Kingdom is primarily God's Kingship – His rule and reign. Now, listen very carefully. The degree to which the world will experience God's Kingdom will happen in different stages throughout history. The Bible says there is a future reality of God's Kingdom when God's rule will be perfectly realized and manifest over all of creation. This is when Jesus returns and makes all things new and the Bible says, "that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And there is a present reality in which God's Kingship and blessing can be experienced in the here and now. In the future age of God's Kingdom we will experience the full and perfect blessing that comes with God's rule fully realized (no sickness, no death, no sorrow, no sin, etc.) There is also a degree of God's blessed rule that we can enter into and experience today (freedom from bondages, relational healing, breaking of addictions, even healings). To the degree that God is King over your life is the degree to which you will experience His blessings! So this is a Biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God. It is the sovereign rule of God that will be fully realized when Jesus returns and it is a present reality for those who come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ today.

**OG DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *In what ways have you experienced the blessings of God's Kingdom in your life today?*

## Conclusion:

Back in May of this year, I was doing my devotions and God showed me something I had never seen before about the Last Supper.

<sup>20</sup> "When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. <sup>21</sup> And while they were eating, He said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray Me."

<sup>22</sup> They were very sad and began to say to Him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me.

<sup>24</sup> The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

<sup>25</sup> Then Judas, the one who would betray Him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so." (Matthew 26:20-25).

One after the other, each disciple asked if they would be the one to betray Jesus. Each addressed Him as 'Lord'. When Judas asked, he addressed Jesus as 'Rabbi'. 'Rabbi' means 'Teacher' in Hebrew.





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Is it possible that Judas never acknowledged Jesus as Lord? Was Jesus the Messiah to Judas or was He simply a good teacher? Possibly a means to an end? Am I serving Jesus' purposes or is He serving mine? Is my relationship with God transactional or transformational? Perhaps Judas followed Jesus because he saw the crowds as a means of wealth or influence. Perhaps he saw Jesus as a way to change his circumstances. Whatever the case may be, he didn't serve Jesus as Lord.

Judas was among the Twelve. He had front-row seats to the teachings and miracles. But Judas never acknowledged Jesus as Lord. He never entered into the Kingdom of God. How about you? Have you brought your life under the Kingship of Jesus? Is He your Lord? Have you come into His Kingdom?

**OG DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *Are there any areas of your life that are not under the Kingdom of God? Finances? Relationships? Patterns? How might the Holy Spirit be leading you to bring your entire life under God's Kingdom?*